



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEBRASKA SURPASSES NATIONAL ACT SCORES IN ALL AREAS

Nebraska achievement levels continue to remain above the national average on the ACT college entrance exam that measures college readiness in English, reading, mathematics and science.

Nebraska's average 2016 ACT composite score of 21.4 was higher than the national average of 20.8, but slightly lower from the previous year's average score of 21.5. The national average was 21 in 2015. The highest possible ACT score is 36.

Eighty-eight percent of 2016 Nebraska graduating seniors—18,598 students—took the ACT. That compares to 64 percent nationally. Of the 23 states with 80 percent or more graduates taking the ACT, Nebraska continued to score at the top. This is significant as states that test a high percentage of graduates tend to have lower averages since the scores include more students who are not on the college course-taking track.

Nevertheless, Nebraska achievement gaps between Hispanic and African American students and their white and Asian American counterparts remain substantial. While 45 percent of Asian American students and 49 percent of white students showed strong readiness for college coursework, just 18 percent of Hispanic students and only 12 percent of African American students earned that same level of achievement.

The following are among the other key findings from this year's Nebraska ACT data:

- Nebraska's STEM score—a combined measure of math and science designed to predict readiness for success in STEM majors in college—is higher than the national average (21.4 versus 20.9.)
- ACT provided students fee waivers to give more access and opportunity to students. ACT issued 4,422 fee waivers to low-income students in Nebraska during the 2015-2016 school year, but only 3,619 were used. This represents lost opportunities for low-income students.
- The number of Hispanic students in Nebraska taking the ACT has increased substantially (up 33 percent since 2012) while the number of African American students taking the ACT has remained stable at four percent.
- More than one third (35 percent) of 2016 graduates took the ACT test only once compared to 57 percent nationally.
- Between 2012 and 2016 the number of students taking the ACT in Nebraska increased by 10 percent.
- 90 percent of Nebraska's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education.